

Chapter 2 – Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods, the places where we live, learn and play, and increasingly work, constitute the largest use of land in the city. Collectively, we regard our neighborhoods with appreciation as places of security. Also, homes often represent the largest single investment residents will ever make. The consequent desire to protect the value of this resource makes the idea of protecting neighborhoods a core value in Colorado Springs.

Inclusion of Neighborhoods as a separate chapter results from the need to clearly describe what we want. Most notably, citizens seek to participate in the decisions that affect them. Implicit in this involvement is the concept that a deliberative process can produce a lasting quality and character for neighborhoods. In addition, the creation of new neighborhoods will involve a change in the relatively recent pattern of development that isolates large expanses of similar houses. This pattern increases dependence on the automobile and contributes to increasing congestion on our roadways.

Preservation of the quality of our neighborhoods was the primary value espoused by the participants in the Comprehensive Plan Workshops in the fall of 1998. Protecting neighborhoods from adverse consequences of growth, reversing effects of deterioration and nurturing the identity of emerging neighborhoods were also clearly appreciated by participants.

Concepts in this chapter reflect values held by the community. It seeks to define types of neighborhoods, and on the basis of that definition, provide direction to protect, enhance and revitalize them. In addition, the foundation for new neighborhoods that will contribute to the quality of our built environment is offered.

Definitions

Community Planning Areas: Community planning areas are large, contiguous sections of the city with relatively consistent development characteristics. They are composed of several residential areas and served by multiple activity centers. Community planning areas create manageable units for land use, transportation, facility, demographic, and growth analysis. These planning units are used to provide a context for the evaluation of development proposals, such as master plans. They are mapped on the Vision Map for the Comprehensive Plan, and they are coincidental with the Planning Evaluation Zones used by the City.

Conservation District: A non-regulatory designation of a geographic area intended to conserve the desirable public aspects of topography, vegetation, scenic vistas, streetscapes and public spaces through the use of design guidelines.

Historic Preservation District: Designation by ordinance of a geographic area composed of structures, objects or improvements that displays historic and/or architectural significance and that the City has determined appropriate for preservation.

Neighborhood: A geographic sub-area within the city that contains residential land uses. The extent of a neighborhood is variable and may be defined by tradition, period of building and development, or subdivision patterns. Neighborhood boundaries may include such features as major streets or other physical features.

Neighborhood-based Organization: An entity composed of individuals, businesses and/or institutions associated with one or more specific neighborhoods that is recognized by the City as a partner in communicating information and assisting public participation in the development process.

Planning Evaluation Zones: See definition of Community Planning Areas.

Strategic Network of Long-range Plans: A network of long-range plans to be developed for transportation, infrastructure, and services as identified in the City's Strategic Plan. They include the Intermodal Transportation Plan, the Long-range Public Works Infrastructure and Services Plan, the Long-range Plan for Police Services, the Long-range Plan for Fire Services, the Parks Capital System Master Plan, and the Parks System Services Master Plan.

Neighborhood Organization

Objective N 1: Focus On Neighborhoods

Create functional neighborhoods when planning and developing residential areas. Regard neighborhoods as the central organizing element for planning residential areas. Rely on neighborhood-based organizations as a means of involving residents and property owners in the decision-making process.

Policy N 101: Utilize Neighborhoods as the Fundamental Building Blocks for Residential Development

Utilize neighborhoods as the fundamental building blocks for developing and improving Low Residential and General Residential areas, as well as integrating these areas with non-residential areas.

Strategy N 101a: Encourage Neighborhoods to Define Their Own Geographic Areas

Acknowledge the geographic areas of individual neighborhoods on the basis of such elements as home owner associations, tradition, period of construction, architectural styles, common subdivision patterns, major roads, or association with a church, school, park, or other civic or institutional use.

Strategy N 101b: Classify Neighborhoods by Development Status

Classify neighborhoods into four defining categories: established and stable; established and redeveloping; developing; and new.

Policy N 102: Foster Cooperation with and by Neighborhoods

Encourage neighborhood residents to participate in the development review, capital improvement and municipal service decisions that affect them. Neighborhood-based organizations can provide effective opportunities for residents and property owners to participate in the evaluation of development proposals, and in planning community facilities.

Strategy N 102a: Support Neighborhood-based Organizations

Support existing neighborhood-based organizations by providing technical information about land use proposals, sponsoring meetings and encouraging comment in a timely manner. Use such tools as neighborhood watch programs, training programs and block parties to enhance effectiveness of neighborhood-based organizations. Foster the creation of new neighborhood-based organizations throughout the city.

Strategy N 102b: Encourage Active Participation in Decision-making from Residents and Property Owners
Encourage active participation from residents, property owners and neighborhood-based organizations for land development, infrastructure and services planning, prioritization and decisions. Notify people and organizations that may be affected by these issues in a timely manner so they have an opportunity to participate in the planning, prioritization and decision-making processes.

Strategy N 102c: Encourage Community Partnerships with Public and Private Non-profit Entities
Encourage community partnerships with public and private non-profit entities, such as schools, churches, service clubs, neighborhood life centers and private sports facilities, to enhance municipal facilities and services within neighborhoods.

Strategy N 102d: Use Planning Evaluation Zones
Encourage neighborhood-based organizations to use the Planning Evaluation Zone data as sources of information.

Strategy N 102e: Utilize Neighborhood Advocate
Utilize a neighborhood advocate to enhance communication and coordination with neighborhood-based organizations, and to provide a neighborhood perspective in the city's administration of land development, and capital improvement planning, prioritization and decisions.

Enhancement

Objective N 2: Enhance Neighborhoods

Preserve and enhance existing and established neighborhoods and support developing and redeveloping neighborhoods. While neighborhoods change over time, there are certain fundamental characteristics of most neighborhoods, such as natural features and landscaping, building and street patterns, historic and cultural features, parks, open space and schools, which need to be preserved in order to maintain their character. At the same time, there are new and developing residential areas that need to be supported so that they emerge as well-functioning neighborhoods.

Policy N 201: Protect Established and Stable Neighborhoods

Protect the character of established and stable neighborhoods through neighborhood planning, assistance to neighborhood organizations, and supportive regulatory actions.

Strategy N 201a: Preserve and Enhance the Physical Elements that Define a Neighborhood's Character

In considering development proposals, preserve the physical elements that contribute to a neighborhood's identity and character, such as natural features, buildings and development patterns, historic and cultural features, parks, open space and schools. Where appropriate, utilize historic preservation districts and conservation districts as tools to achieve preservation and enhancement of historic and cultural resources.

Strategy N 201b: Revise Zoning and Subdivision Regulations to Recognize Neighborhood Character

Revise zoning and subdivision regulations to provide flexibility in code administration to recognize neighborhood character while respecting public safety concerns.

Strategy N 201c: Evaluate Land Use Proposals Recognizing Anticipated Changes to Neighborhood Conditions

Evaluate land use proposals in existing, stable neighborhoods on the basis of projected changes in scale, traffic patterns, intensity of use, pedestrian orientation, and relationship of the site to adjacent development.

Policy N 202: Assist and Support Established and Redeveloping Neighborhoods

Assist established and redeveloping neighborhoods in neighborhood planning, improving transportation and infrastructure systems, and promoting redevelopment efforts.

Strategy N 202a: Prepare Neighborhood Plans to Coordinate Redevelopment

Prepare neighborhood redevelopment plans to identify functional needs and to coordinate redevelopment programs and infrastructure improvements for targeted areas.

Strategy N 202b: Provide Incentives to Foster Reinvestment

Utilize incentives to encourage redevelopment. Regulatory incentives may be used to expedite the development approval process. Change zoning classifications when consistent with neighborhood redevelopment plans. Target financial incentives, such as rehabilitation loans/grants, offsets of development fees, and tax-advantaged project financing, to leverage additional investment in redeveloping neighborhoods and assist current residents to remain.

Strategy N 202c: Support School Districts in Their Efforts to Enhance Neighborhood Schools

Engage in cooperative programs with the school districts, to increase school enrollment in those facilities with existing or projected surplus capacity, and to enhance the quality of neighborhood schools.

Strategy N 202d: Target Financial Assistance Programs to Attract Families

Structure financial assistance programs to attract families with children to neighborhoods containing schools with surplus capacity. Programs may include low interest loans for first time homebuyers, below market rate loans to construct or rehabilitate housing for families with children, and mortgage down payment assistance.

Strategy N 202e: Encourage Development of Public Gathering Places in Redeveloping Neighborhoods

Encourage the development of a landscaped, outdoor center in each redeveloped neighborhood to serve as a focal point and gathering place for the public. This may occur in conjunction with existing schools, parks, recreational facilities, supporting retail uses, community centers, neighborhood life centers, or other civic or institutional uses. Where existing facilities are inappropriate, a new center may be developed.

Strategy N 202f: Improve Neighborhood Zoning Code Enforcement Efforts

Use neighborhood zoning code enforcement to reinforce neighborhood stability. When appropriate, use systematic enforcement to address neighborhood problems. Utilize a revolving loan fund as a tool to aid zoning code enforcement efforts.

Strategy N 202g: Revise Development Standards to Achieve Compatibility

Apply development standards to all redevelopment projects so they achieve compatibility with existing neighborhood scale, promote a balance of land uses and protect historic resources.

Policy N 203: Partner with the Development Industry to Create Functional and Attractive New and Developing Neighborhoods

Use master plans to develop neighborhoods that complement the existing development pattern. Use the identity of newly developing neighborhoods to reinforce a sense of community.

Strategy N 203a: Develop Neighborhoods in Areas Consistent with the Planned Provision of Public Services and Facilities

Build neighborhoods in proximity to existing development and consistent with the planned provision of public services and facilities, as coordinated by the City's Strategic Plan and the City's Strategic Network of Long-range Plans.

Strategy N 203b: Achieve Balanced Mix of Land Uses

Use the land development review process to plan well-functioning new neighborhoods. Reserve planned land uses in new neighborhoods to achieve a balanced mix of land uses over time.

Strategy N 203c: Support a Mix of Housing Types and Densities

Amend and adopt zoning guidelines and standards to achieve a variety of housing types, styles, and densities in new and developing neighborhoods.

Strategy N 203d: Incorporate Natural Features

Protect natural environmental features, including rock outcroppings, drainage areas, wildlife habitat, unique topographic features, and view corridors by incorporating them into new and developing neighborhoods, consistent with the guidelines of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

Strategy N 203e: Enhance Neighborhood Connectivity Standards

Review subdivision and development standards requiring provision of sidewalks, walkways, trails, and appropriate transit and pedestrian facilities. Revise these standards to improve street, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and commercial developments, civic uses, and parks with the goal of making neighborhoods more accessible, walkable, and pedestrian friendly.

Strategy N 203f: Develop Gathering Places

Plan and develop a landscaped, outdoor center for each new neighborhood in conjunction with schools, parks, recreational facilities, supporting retail uses, community centers, neighborhood life centers or other civic or institutional uses to function as a focal point and gathering place for the public.

Mixed-Use

Objective N 3: Vary Neighborhood Patterns

Integrate a variety of housing types and densities with amenities, services, and retail uses to generate opportunities and choices for households. When the character, context and scale of the surrounding neighborhood are taken into account, mixed-use developments can provide unique opportunities for employment, shopping, housing choice, and public gathering space, while having a positive impact on the neighborhood.

Policy N 301: Identify and Develop Mutually Supportive Mixed Uses

Develop an appropriate mix of land uses and differing housing types in both new and existing neighborhoods.

Strategy N 301a: Identify Non-Residential Land Uses that Support Neighborhoods

Identify the type, scale and nature of non-residential uses that contribute to the efficient functioning and attractiveness of neighborhoods.

Strategy N 301b: Develop Design Guidelines and Standards that Support Mixed-Use Developments

Develop guidelines and standards for mixed-use developments that are compatible with neighborhoods.

Policy N 302: Promote Development of Mixed-Use Neighborhoods

Provide residents the choice of walking, bicycling or driving to parks, schools, work, shopping, places of worship, and transit stops in their own and other neighborhoods.

Strategy N 302a: Support Mixed-Use Development through Master Plans and Zoning Revisions

Support mixed-use development through master plan amendments and zoning revisions. Rewrite zoning district regulations to encourage the development of small-scale, local activity centers that serve neighborhoods. Consider approval of new mixed-use developments when streets possess sufficient vehicular capacity and pedestrian connections.

Strategy N 302b: Support a Mix of Housing Types and Densities in Neighborhoods

Amend and adopt zoning guidelines and standards to achieve a variety of housing types and densities in neighborhoods.

Transportation

Objective N 4: Mitigate Transportation Impacts

Design improvements to the transportation system that balance an efficient and convenient transportation system with the integrity and character of neighborhoods. Proposed improvements to the transportation system will take into account such issues as neighborhood cut-through traffic, residential traffic speeds, pedestrian and bicycle safety and accessibility, landscaping, historic features, and noise.

Policy N 401: Reduce Traffic-related Impacts on Existing Neighborhoods

Protect the integrity and character of existing neighborhoods as transportation improvements are planned and constructed.

Strategy N 401a: Evaluate Proposed Capital Improvements

In designing transportation-related capital improvements, evaluate their impact on such elements of neighborhood character as established street patterns, parks, pedestrian ways, landscaped medians, landscaping and building patterns, and adjacent land uses.

Strategy N 401b: Mitigate Traffic Impacts

Mitigate the projected impacts of proposed transportation improvements on neighborhoods. Where appropriate, use such tools as bridge and street design, landscaping, traffic calming, photo radar, noise reduction and speed adjustment measures. Coordinate the application of mitigation tools with affected citizens and organizations, and with entities responsible for public safety.

Policy N 402: Plan for Transportation Improvements to Enhance New Neighborhoods
Plan and construct transportation improvements to support new neighborhoods.

Strategy N 402a: Connect Street System Components

Connect the arterial street system components concurrently with development of new neighborhoods to achieve connectivity and provide emergency access for public safety.

Strategy N 402b: Construct Arterials Adjacent to Neighborhoods

Plan and construct new and connecting arterial streets adjacent to neighborhoods instead of through them.

Strategy N 402c: Support Multi-modal Transportation Options

Plan, design and construct neighborhood traffic, transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities to achieve the appropriate level of access and circulation for each mode.